

VIEWPOINT



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A Nursing Leader's Perspective in Preparing for Magnet® Redesignation in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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REFLECTIONS FROM A LEADER

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic affected the U.S. in early 2020 and brought significant changes to the healthcare industry. Some of the challenges we faced over the last 20 months included shortages in testing supplies, the need to expand limited bed capacity, supply chain logistics, staffing shortages, high demand for high-acuity beds, and constant, and sometimes inconsistent guidelines from federal, state, and local government agencies. The pandemic not only stressed the healthcare system to the point of breaking, but it also stressed our health care teams to the brink of emotional and physical exhaustion. My experience as a Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) during the pandemic was filled with fear, anxiety, and sadness. On the flip side, it was also filled with triumph, pride, accomplishment, and gratitude.

Guiding our teams through the pandemic required a departure from conventional practices. Hospitals operate in a highly complex and unpredictable environment. COVID-19 heightened the complexity and unpredictability to levels never experienced in my nursing career. As a team, we had to change our communication strategy as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines changed daily, if not hourly. Our nursing leaders had to adapt quickly to support our health care team: making decisions about personal protective equipment allocation, redesigning our care delivery model to support the surge of COVID-19 patients while carefully monitoring the emotional and physical health of our staff and leaders alike. The COVID-19 pandemic presented opportunities for creativity and flexibility to adapt while implementing innovative approaches. Our leaders worked tirelessly to support our dedicated staff, who demonstrated courage and resilience, passion for

the profession, delivering excellence through the art of nursing at bedside, as they tried to save everyone who was infected with the COVID-19 virus.

For Baptist Hospital of Miami, a multispecialty, community-based hospital located in South Florida, the pandemic presented unique challenges. As a new CNO with only two weeks into my new role, I was tasked with supporting, guiding, and leading our Nursing team in preparation for our 6th Magnet® designation in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was not an easy task to direct preparation efforts for a re-designation status, especially when we had to overcome the challenges that other healthcare organizations faced during the pandemic. Such challenges included shortages in supply and personnel for the incoming large influx of patients with COVID-19.

However, in the face of adversity and uncertainty, leaders find ways to inspire and lead even when they may not have the answers. The pandemic experience served as a test for many of my leaders to trust their teams, to push themselves and others to find creative solutions to complex situations, and create communication channels to quickly deliver critical information. As we moved through the first wave of the pandemic, we made a decision early on to focus all of our nursing resources to assist and support our clinical teams. During the pandemic, our nurses and nursing leaders demonstrated what the Magnet® culture is about, delivering excellence in nursing care, despite having to deal with precarious circumstances, or facing the unknown.

Our staff worked in unity to deliver excellence in nursing care and strive for good patient outcomes. Our nurses and clinical partners demonstrated resilience and teamwork, as they

collaborated with other members of the interdisciplinary team. This was evident in many processes, including the turning teams as they turned COVID-19 patients to prone positioning in hopes to improve their survival. In other instances, it meant working extra shifts to support colleagues who fell ill or reached emotional and physical exhaustion. For those who succumbed to the virus, delivering the art of nursing at bedside translated to comfort care during the last few hours or minutes of life, connecting relatives with their loved ones through technology for the last farewell.

As an organization, we implemented principles of complexity science. Complexity science is the multidisciplinary study of complex systems, where units are heterogeneous, but dynamic, and highly interdependent. Under the tenet of complexity, events like the COVID-19 pandemic and its sequelae are understandable, and in a sense, “normal”. This perspective resonates with the work nurses do of taking care of patients during “normal” and “abnormal” times (White et al., 2021). They remain calm and keep pressing on. While they may not be in full control of the adversity, they channel the energy in search for possible solutions to overcome the adversity. During the COVID-19 outbreak, we identified three principles of complexity science: communication, collaboration, and innovation, critical to an effective response to disasters faced during this world-wide pandemic.

While the pandemic has certainly changed the way nursing is practiced and how care is delivered, for us it has become another huge leap forward as nurses and health care professionals. We have shown our resilience and how indispensable we are to the world. As we looked at the evidence that supports this status of Magnet® re-designation, the process not only validated but also reinforced what being a Magnet® designated hospital is about. Our Magnet® Program Director was instrumental in working with nursing leaders and other members of our interdisciplinary team to identify best practices and outcomes that supported this re-designation in the midst of the pandemic. Consequently, lots of exemplars came about to indicate the culture of resilience and excellence at Baptist Hospital. It remains to be seen what the long term outcome of this pandemic will be. However, we are confident that in the midst of the adversity, our nurses will continue to deliver excellence in nursing care.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The author reports no conflicts of interest. The author alone is responsible for the content and writing of the paper.

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